

**FREEPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**FREEPORT, MAINE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 25, 2007**

**DRAFT**

**Call to Order**

A special meeting between the Freeport School Committee and Yarmouth RPC Representatives was held on September 25, 2007 in the Freeport Town Hall Council Chambers. Chair Chris Leighton called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

**Roll Call**

Present: Sean Crean, John Gleason, Chris Leighton, Susan Martling, Christine Munroe and Beth Parker. John Morang Excused

**Welcome**

Chris Leighton welcomed the Yarmouth RPC members Karl Steinbach, David Ray, Tim Wheaton, Judy Ann Smith and Superintendent Ken Murphy

David Ray stated Yarmouth is engaging in beginning of talks to decide whether or not to consolidate. Ken Murphy suggested moving Hopes/Fears to second meeting if necessary.

**Status of Groups re: School Reorganization**

David Ray – (Yarmouth) Possibly saw Letter of Intent different than some other communities, did not prioritize their choices as 1, 2, 3. Understood charge from state was explore consolidation with neighbors. School Committee was active in molding legislation into something different. Exemption put into bill for efficient high performing schools. This year committee can redefine this. Yarmouth sees one year pass they'll lose next year. Need to do due diligence on all choices: Exemption, Falmouth/SAD 51, Freeport – they don't believe they have to consolidate because can also take penalty. Want to make a recommendation to committee.

Chris Leighton –Freeport's Letter of Intent: primary piece Freeport/Pownal/Durham and request for exemption of 2500 student minimum. Footnote indicates we'll continue to talk with Yarmouth. People still not clear. Last night Freeport School Committee agreed to submit letter to Commissioner clarifying intent to continue to converse with Yarmouth RPC. Durham work: RPC met and will call School Committee meeting to report to School Committee. They will make decision Thursday. Background clarified – Can continue to talk with multiple partners but on December 1 you may only submit one plan.

Tim Wheaton – RPC is advisory to School Committee.

Bob Kautz – Final say is community at referendum

**Hopes**

Fred Palmer- Critical mass so able to offer programs, more quality programs. Freeport can offer a great diverse community with multiple talents.

John Gleason – Freeport has declining school population

Tim Wheaton – Leave school system a little better – improvement and deliver something back to taxpayers

Susan Martling – Maximize resources, greater opportunity for learning

Elaine Tomaszewski – Greater opportunity for students, energize district to reach even higher; further increase support for education.

Sean Crean – What is consolidation and what isn't, do we mean sharing kids for example

Beth Parker – Skeptical of state claims; wants Towns' people to be able to make decisions

Judy Ann – That it realizes savings State contemplates; fear is it will impact programming

Ken Murphy – Can stand on own if Yarmouth votes. Explain why its in Yarmouth's best interest based on good data so 20 years from now people won't look back and (regret).

Karl Steinbach – We have hope for consolidation, but are not sure it'll be feasible. Perhaps in other parts of state it works. Hoped additional costs don't outweigh savings.

David Ray – He "dreams" people in the audience will tell Commissioner and Governor this forced consolidation is not going to be helpful. Needs to be based on real data not assumptions.

Rick White – Individually we make best decision for our communities. Fears – Dream (of David) will not happen; is there cost savings, as Town Council – impact on community from character and sense of financial well being.

Chris Munroe – Decline in high school enrollment – through consolidation we can maintain small community at lower grades but at high school level we can expand offerings – electives.

Chris Leighton – Proponent of consolidation – willing to explore – may discover it doesn't work through RPC process but he's willing to try this planning.

Tim Wheaton – What consolidation means needs to be clear

### **Fears**

Rick White – Fear is phase 2 is consolidation of classrooms – critically important we know it up front.

Fred Palmer – We'll focus so much on costs we'll lose sight of value of what we'll buy.

Sean Crean – Not enough information in front of us. Biggest fear is non commitment – four communities involved. He's really concerned of Freeport/Pownal. Concerned we couldn't move forward because others do not need to face same timeline.

Chris Leighton – State has taken the money. Despite our efforts to save through consolidation the money is gone.

Karl Steinbach – don't have adequate data/ data may change/ may pay more for less.

Susan Martling – We follow steps/turns into mess/ education quality declines.

Tim Wheaton – Press covers story superficially; doesn't get into details to help educate the public.

Fear is we perpetuate status quo. Fear unknown – new BVR and what it means if different population asked to vote on Yarmouth's plan. Committees have chosen particular course – all of a sudden different rules to the game – fears what'll happen.

John Gleason – Consolidation billed as reducing admin costs and plowing savings back into schools.

Because greater difference when Freeport needs to pay additional funds to consolidate with Yarmouth and in return we don't deliver on promise of higher quality education.

### **Next Steps**

David Ray -Get back together

-Financial analysis from Business Managers confirmed by DOE

-Discussion of risk/rewards of consolidating district vision of people around table/major topics that will affect how it works.

Karl Steinbach – We continue to come back to finances. If we focus on financials, take next steps of what financial benefits can we find. Carve out very rough estimate of what we're talking about.

Fred Palmer – Concerns we think our community will have with journey with one another. Discuss if there are ways to put to rest voter issues of budget passage.

Judy Ann Smith – Continue to talk with Yarmouth to determine next steps.

Rick White – Freeport/Pownal/Durham drill down and continue dialog with Yarmouth. It is important to understand what communities value.

Ken Murphy – Yarmouth needs to submit progress report; here is an example of a good faith effort. Most people will look at this through financial lens. Freeport is Yarmouth’s best financial partner – how does Freeport feel about this – who comes down our up? Thinks one or two meetings will aid our decision.

Beth Parker – Meet and dig deeper into financials while keeping education in mind at all times.

John Gleason – Include discussion of Freeport/Pownal/Yarmouth/Durham so we describe the implications of various scenarios.

### **To Be Clarified**

If Freeport opts out and stays a municipal system does that recommendation have to go to the voters? Bob Kautz will check.

Tim Wheaton clarified the chain of events that needs to happen to make the plan operational. We would need to have voter approval from both communities.

John Gleason – would design a system with Yarmouth included in the planning should Yarmouth decide to join with us sometime in the future. Want to be sure Yarmouth is welcome in the process substantively.

Fred Palmer – That may influence our decision to submit a plan by December.

Bob Kautz – Clarified if we went slower the deadline would be March but by December 1 a plan needs to be turned in for joining with one (RSU) plan.

David Ray – Re: Yarmouth’s participation in a more creative way – probably doesn’t make sense to sit in on negotiating (debt service) but he appreciates looking at it in a different creative way.

Rick White – Asked about how far Yarmouth went in opt out.

David Ray – They’ve done financial analysis – do not believe consolidation will bring significant improvements.

### **Last Comments**

David Ray – Thank you for candor, business like way of meeting.

Chris Leighton – workload of RPC is intense – hopes committee will rally around and provide them with support.

Next meeting RPC – Elaine and Ken will work on scheduling; Freeport School Committee can be involved if they so decide.

### **Adjournment**

*On a motion made by Mr. Gleason, seconded by Ms. Munroe*

#### **It was voted:**

To adjourn at 9:30 P.M.

Approved: 6 – 0

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine M. Tomaszewski  
Superintendent of Schools